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THE FAITH OF JESUS.

By The REV. THOMAS C. HALL,
Chicago.

Faith as a subjective persuasion and an objective norm.—The faith that Jesus asked: his use of words; faith in the Fourth Gospel.—The real faith of Jesus is a new life.

Careless use of the expressions "the faith of Jesus Christ" and the "Christian faith" has led to an almost insuperable difficulty existing in the minds of many in distinguishing between the subjective faith and the various attempts to give it an objective expression in language. The law of gravitation is one thing, acting, so far as we know, all through space; and our formulation of that law, which may yet have to be modified by increasing refinement in physical measurements and knowledge, is quite another thing. Not even the exhaustive treatment by Cremer of the words πιστεύειν, πίστις and πιστός brings adequately to light the deep underlying difference between the objective and subjective use of the word πίστις. Very properly Cremer does emphasize the element of personal trust that always enters into the New Testament word. "It is a persuasion which is based upon trust and knowledge" (Cremer's Lexicon). It has, moreover, says the same writer, as a most fundamental characteristic, "a personal relationship." It is evident indeed that such a personal relationship as is based on trust in Jesus either as friend or healer or teacher must more or less consciously modify the whole life of the one trusting. As he becomes analytical and reflective he will seek to formulate the changes brought about by this new relationship. The subjective πίστις will become, by meditation, the object of his discursive reason. And as the analytic mind seeks to thus formulate faith, it may become purely objective to the thinking mind. According to our confidence in the ability of the discursive reason thus to formulate faith, will this formulation be identified with our actual πίστις.

We cannot wonder, then, that in the history of faith we find all stages of this process marked by the same set of terms, and deep confusion arising from confounding attitudes *implied* in faith with the extreme objective attempts to express it in a *Regula Fidei*. The rise of the rule of faith is an interesting history, baleful in its course, a history that had reached its most degrading state as early as the bigoted and thoroughly unchristian type of thought represented by Tertullian.

The faith that Jesus demanded in others was a personal confidence that must sooner or later develop an identity between the content of the faith of teacher and taught; hence personal relationship is the basis, and the acceptance of a body of teaching (*διδασχῇ*), however a logical outcome, is still but an outcome. With neither question, that of the relationship implied by Jesus as necessary to individual and world salvation, nor the content of the body of teaching that springs from that relationship, has the so-called systematic theology of the Church ever much busied itself.

To answer the first of these questions let the student turn to the way Jesus himself used the words *πίστις* and *πιστεύειν*. At once we see that "to believe" is to accept the person of Jesus. One large class of passages represents Christ as challenging acceptance of him as a healer (Matt. 18 : 13; Mark 5 : 36; 9 : 24, and all the passages where faith precedes a cure). It is perfectly evident from many of these passages that the knowledge possessed about Jesus was the very slightest. The man born blind and cured by Christ wants to know who he is that he may accept him (John 9 : 36). The whole story is instructive as an example of faith in Christ as *ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ*, and so the logical outcome of dependence upon Jesus as a healer and friend. Even where Jesus is believed in as the Messiah the evidence is not lacking that only the crudest ideas of what the Messiah was prevailed among many. Philip and Nathanael discover the Messiah very early in Jesus (John 1 : 45-50). But it was only towards the close that Jesus said, "have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip?" (John 14 : 9). "The little ones believe on him" and not about him (Mark 9 : 42). It

was not a theory about him, nor yet a distinctly defined doctrine of his person, for this was hidden even from his adult disciples. Peter's simple creed would not have satisfied the Nicene Council (John 6 : 6 ; Matt. 16 : 16). We cannot blame intelligent men for trying to bring that simple creed into living connection with a philosophy of God and human life, but it has been a grave mistake to suppose that this human synthesis is either "the faith" of which the New Testament speaks as necessary to salvation, or is to be identified with the *πίστις* of Jesus. Faith is as a grain of mustard seed with inherent life, and is not identical with any intellectual propositions which may be more or less the outcome of that faith. No doubt close questioning would have elicited from such faithful ones as the man cured of the palsy (Matt. 9 : 2) more or less coherent explanations of their opinions about Christ, and why they accepted him as healer. But it was not their imperfect opinions that Christ praises, but their attitude of life toward him. This attitude results first in conduct and then, no doubt, later in more or less imperfect theories about him. It was not correct opinion about Christ's deity and sonship that Christ missed when he asked his followers amid the storm "Where is your faith?" (Luke 8 : 2). It was the lack of personal confidence in him, their "fearfulness" (Mark 4 : 40) which he gently reproves. And in Luke 18 : 8 when Christ asks the question, "Shall he find faith (on earth)?" (*πίστιν* or *τὴν πίστιν*, Tischendorf 8th edition gives the article which W. and H. omit), the context clearly indicates that reception of him at his second coming as the king is the matter in doubt.

It is worthy of note that the fourth Gospel never uses the word *πίστις*, but the verb is used in such a way as to leave no manner of doubt as to just what Christ understood by "believing on him." The first definition of his person and office that Christ recognizes as "believing," is on the part of Nathanael, who calls him "King of Israel" and "Son of God" (John 1 : 50). Naturally Nathanael knew nothing of an immaculate birth or a resurrection from the dead ; nor can the phrase "Son of God" be any clear metaphysical description of Christ's person, seeing that even the chosen apostles failed to comprehend his unique

personality until after Pentecost. Many believed "on his name, seeing the signs which he did. That is to say, his name "Ἰησοῦς" or Jesus and his claimed title as "the anointed" suggested one in the long line of succession among those who should redeem Israel. The conceptions of redemption were crude in the extreme. No doubt a leader in a struggle for national independence was often the highest hope cherished. But even this crude reception Christ accepts as the basis of a better hope, but he did not trust himself to such believers (John 2 : 24). Faith in him was no break from the spiritual succession of the Old Testament, and involved no knowledge not to be found there. It is a monstrous abuse of exegesis, however, to claim that any of the metaphysical refinements of Nicene orthodoxy have a place in the Old Testament. Nicodemus ought to have understood the new divine birth (John 3 : 10), and had he understood it he would have possessed a saving faith, and then, as there was opportunity offered, he would have received and understood divine messages (John 3 : 11), but the perfect knowledge of Christ grows out of the implanted faith (3 : 5) and not saving faith out of knowledge ; it is for believing hearts that the Son of Man is lifted up (John 3 : 14-15).

For the most part, in John's use of πιστεύειν the thing involved is the acceptance of the "word of Jesus" on the basis, of course, of confidence in him as a man and teacher, so John 4 : 50. The man whose child was saved can have had only the most confused ideas of Christ's divinity, or even teaching, but personal confidence in Christ, even in crudest form, as healer and teacher is reckoned as "faith" by Christ, as we see from Matthew 8 : 9. So we find the Samaritans "believing" on the basis of the imperfect knowledge and testimony of a poor, ignorant woman. In some way, in some sense, Jesus was to be the "Saviour of the world" (John 4 : 42). Faith has to revolutionize old habits, old superstitions, and overcome old prejudices ; hence believing apostles with a believing faith, and far more intelligent conceptions and intellectual apprehensions of Christ, still failed for years to reach what the Samaritans grasped at once, that Christ was a world-Saviour. Happily, eternal life depends not on cor-

rect intellectual apprehension of Christ, or possibly the martyr James might fail before the judgment-seat, but on the whole attitude of heart and life toward Christ (John 5 : 24 and 5 : 46). And it is this attitude toward him that evidences the attitude toward God (John 6 : 28-40). In him dwelt the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and he just so far became a test of the heart's attitude toward God. For judgment was Christ come into the world (John 9 : 39). The Pharisees knew enough, Christ had no quarrel with their orthodoxy, but it was dead. Their ears heard no prophetic voices, their eyes beheld no visions (Mark 4 : 12). Faith is a new life, its fruitage in conduct, opinion and social habit is often crude and in this life always tentative. It was this faith that Christ found not, but came to bring to a world weary of Pharisaic legalism and finespun philosophy. He came not to reveal the metaphysical subtleties of Nicene orthodoxy in respect to his divinity, but to impart that divinity to all to whom his spirit spoke, awakening longings the world could not satisfy. This divine life is found where Christ is intellectually unknown or wholly misunderstood, and this life is *ἡ πίστις τοῦ Ἰησοῦ*.